

Gonzalez Meza, a beloved mother, grandmother, and friend who changed the face of Texas politics. Choco was a fierce champion for women in public service and a force in the Texas Democratic Party. Her recent passing is a tremendous loss not only for her family, but for so many throughout Texas and the nation whose lives she touched.

Born in Coahuila, Mexico, Choco and her family immigrated to the United States when she was just three years old and settled in Eagle Pass, Texas. She came to San Antonio when she attended St. Mary's University. Choco began effecting meaningful change as a student, when she and my mother, Rosie, helped draft the 10-1 single member district plan adopted in 1977. The skill and initiative she showed led to her being recruited by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, where she helped disenfranchised minorities exercise their right to vote.

Throughout her career, Choco sought to empower others. As Executive Director of the YWCA, she steered women and girls towards success. She elevated the national conversation around poverty as Executive Director of Partnership for Hope. And she pushed to reform public housing and reduce homelessness when she joined her friend Henry G. Cisneros at the Department of Housing and Urban Development as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations and the Liaison to the White House in the Clinton Administration. She continued that work when she returned to San Antonio and became Senior Vice President at the San Antonio Housing Authority. Later, Choco served as President of American Sunrise, a nonprofit that provides educational and economic opportunities for children and families. She founded her own consulting firm, and in 2011, President Barack Obama appointed her to serve as a Commissioner to The Commission on Presidential Scholars.

Choco's unparalleled passion for organizing made her an invaluable asset to the Democratic Party. She served on the Democratic National Committee, was chief of staff for District 5 Councilwoman Shirley Gonzalez, and was elected Bexar County Democratic Chair. Most recently, Choco led Hillary Clinton's campaign operations in San Antonio. In all her political work, Choco tirelessly fought for social justice and strove to create opportunity for marginalized groups.

Choco's spirit lives on through her family—her beloved husband Daniel, daughter Ivalis, granddaughter Emma, and son Danny, who is a trusted member of my staff. Choco was truly a historic figure in Texas politics and a compassionate, selfless soul. We mourn her passing and are grateful for all she gave to our community in San Antonio and to our nation's democracy.

HONORING MRS. HILDA GIRTMAN PITTS

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2016

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Hilda Girtman Pitts, a lifelong resident of Boynton Beach, Florida, who passed at the age of 102 on August 20, 2016. Born in 1913, Mrs. Pitts spent her childhood on 2.5

acres of farmland off the Federal Highway near Boynton Beach.

At the age of 21, she married Solomon Pitts at the St. Paul A.M.E. Church in the city of Boynton Beach, and built their first home on 12th Avenue in-town. After many years of marriage, Mrs. Pitts had eight children, nine grandchildren, as well as many great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. Mrs. Pitts became a "Gold Star Mother" when her son, Cleveland Pitts, made the ultimate sacrifice in the Vietnam War.

Mrs. Pitts was also an entrepreneur. She opened an antique store, known as "Mrs. Hilda's," which sold American-made, handcrafted furniture and home goods. The antique store stands to this day on East Ocean Avenue in Boynton Beach as a memorial to Mrs. Pitts' legacy.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Pitts has been a very religious woman and was heavily involved in the church community in Boynton Beach. She attended the African Methodist Episcopal Church from an early age. She followed her children to the New Christian Life Church in 1984, where she became a dynamic and regular churchgoer.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Hilda Girtman Pitts will be remembered through her family, her friends, and all the many people she touched in her 102 years of life. She was truly a shining star of the Boynton Beach community. I am so pleased to honor her life and legacy. She will be dearly missed.

IN RECOGNITION OF MRS. BRENDA VAUGHN

HON. MARK MEADOWS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2016

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mrs. Brenda Vaughn of McDowell County, North Carolina. On behalf of the people of Western North Carolina, I would like to thank Mrs. Vaughn for over 35 years of service to our communities and congratulate her on her retirement this year.

Brenda Vaughn began her service with the McDowell County Sheriff's Department in 1980 as a dispatcher. She then served as cook at the Sheriff Jail Kitchen until she became a Jailer in October of 1998. After two years in that role, she became an Administrative Assistant then moved up within the Department to Shift Sergeant and later Assistant Jail Administrator. In 2013, Mrs. Vaughn was promoted to Jail Administrator. Mrs. Vaughn has dutifully served the community in this capacity for the last three years.

Outside of work, Mrs. Vaughn continues to be an active member of many community organizations. She is a member of Nealsville Church of God in Glenwood, where she is part of the Ladies Auxiliary. She is also a leader outside of her church, serving as treasurer for the Charles W. Queen Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 84 in McDowell County; as President of the McDowell County Republican Women's Club; and as the Secretary of the McDowell County Republican Party. She and her husband Bobby have two sons and three grandchildren.

Mrs. Vaughn has earned the respect and friendship of the people of McDowell County

through her hard work and wide-ranging involvement in her community. For her service to Western North Carolina, I am honored to express to Mrs. Vaughn the gratitude and best wishes of the people of North Carolina on her retirement.

IN RECOGNITION OF POST 8358 ON ITS 70TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2016

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Chung Mei Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8358 as it celebrates its 70th anniversary. As the members of Post 8358 mark this momentous occasion, I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring them for their long history of service to veterans and the community in Sacramento.

Chung Mei Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8358 was formed on October 19, 1946 by returning Chinese-American veterans from Sacramento. Due to the prevailing prejudiced attitudes of the time, the Chung Mei veterans had no choice but to form their own exclusive VFW Post. Post 8358 is an active and valued member of the Sacramento community, which I represent. For instance, the Chung Mei Post 8358 proudly sponsors the Sacramento Lion Dance Youth Troupe, which helps foster civic responsibility and keeps the traditions of Asian cultures alive for current and future generations. Post 8358 contributes greatly to the diversity and multiplicity of cultures in the Sacramento region, which is one of the most diverse in the entire country.

Post 8358 members are decorated veterans who participate in local parades, staff community events, and host several fundraising drives that provide funds for programs that benefit veterans and their families. Several of the founding members of Post 8358 are amongst the many who are celebrating today. Post 8358 continues to promote services for veterans, cultural acceptance, and civic participation in Sacramento.

Mr. Speaker, as the members of Post 8358 celebrate its 70th anniversary, I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring them for their service to our country and to the Sacramento area.

HONORING GEORGE POUMAKIS

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2016

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor George Poumakis, a highly-successful entrepreneur and distinguished member of the Greek community in my district.

Mr. Poumakis was recently recognized by the Federation of Hellenic American Educators and the Greek Teacher Association of Florida for the being the pioneer and founder of the first Greek immersion charter school in the United States—the Athenian Academy. Today, the Athenian Academy is recognized by the Florida Department of Education as a High Performing School—receiving an "A" grade—